

# 'Tiny houses' make big impact

By Nick Unkovich

Finding solutions to the housing unaffordability crisis has inspired a Whangarei builder to embark on a new style of building.

Marcel Syron last year set up his own business, Love Shack, to do his bit for the tiny house movement in New Zealand after seeing the trend take off in Europe.

The small transportable dwellings are custom-built and provide an alternative to unsustainable and unaffordable housing.

"I wanted to revitalise my building career and saw tiny house building as a great way to do that. I also see the tiny house movement as a great option to aid with the housing crisis and a better way of living," the 38-year-old said.

Marcel, who has been a builder for 21 years, is passionate about the environment, which is another reason he took up the tiny house building style.

Tiny houses are not only more affordable than the average, they also enable the owner to reduce their environmental impact. With eco-tourism on the rise, Marcel hopes to one day establish an eco-retreat in Northland.

A trend towards very small houses, often no more than

25sq m by 5sq m in size, has caught on in Europe and the United States, and is catching on in New Zealand. One of the attractions is that people can construct the house then save up money to buy land where they can then move their house on to, and then save their money to potentially construct a larger house in the future. They are also usually completely mobile.

Currently working on his third fully self-contained prototype, based at his Morningside home, Marcel believes the houses offer a range of benefits

to house-hunters, including more freedom than a traditional house.

"Owners aren't trapped by a huge mortgage and they have the choice to pack up and move their house to another property. They can even go 'off-the-grid' if

they really want to," he said.

He has plans to relocate in the new year to a workshop in Kioreroa Rd.

However, building a house and building a business requires two different skill sets and mentor Joseph Stuart, of Business Mentors New Zealand, has helped Marcel with the realities of running a business.

"Joseph helped me foresee challenges I was going to face before I encountered them. This made tackling things a much smoother and easier process.

"I'd tell anyone starting their own business to work with a mentor. Joseph's advice has been invaluable to me in the past 12 months."

Mr Stuart, who works for Northland Inc and is a volunteer for Business Mentors, says Marcel has had a fantastic first year in business. "He has taken what was just a dream 12 months ago and now has a strong sales and expansion pipeline."

Over the next year, Marcel plans to hire full-time staff. He currently employs one part-time helper for three days a week to help with the building of each Love Shack.



**Marcel Syron in front of his third tiny house and the interior of a completed build (right).**

**PHOTO/MICHAEL CUNNINGHAM**